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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 71/NO. 47 DECEMBER 17, 2007

INSIDE

SWP leader speaks in Venezuela on: 'U.S., a possible revolution'

—PAGES 6–8

Protests hit Australia gov't takeover of Aboriginal communities

BY BOB AIKEN AND RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—"I call it an invasion [of] our people. They are just casting us Aboriginal people aside," Valerie Napaljarri Martin told a crowd of 300 here November 18. The protest was part of a national day of action against the federal government takeover of 73 indigenous communities on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

The actions, called for the week before the November 24 federal elections, took place in nine cities across the country, including in Darwin and Alice Springs in the Territory.

"We are the owners of this land, the first Australians," Martin said. "Now they are laying down the laws on us, squashing our rights."

Last June, then-prime minister John Howard of the Liberal Party announced the federal intervention, claiming it was to deal with child abuse in northern indigenous communities. Since then, newly elected Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd has said his government will continue the federal takeover, with a review after 12 months.

A raft of laws supporting the intervention was passed in August with La-

Continued on page 2

Judge denies Guantánamo prisoners right to confront their accusers

BY SAM MANUEL

Prisoners held by the U.S. military as "enemy combatants" have no right to know the identities of prosecution witnesses against them, a military judge has ruled. The government contends the measure is necessary to protect its witnesses from retaliation by al-Qaeda.

Omar Ahmed Khadr is one of 300 prisoners still being held at the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. He could be the first of these to be tried under the Military Commissions Act. In 2006 Congress established "military commissions" to hold trials under severely restricted rights for defendants.

In such trials, the prisoners are represented by a "personal representative," not a lawyer. They cannot see classified evidence used against them, and information against them obtained through torture is admissible as evidence. Under the recent court order, Khadr would be denied the constitutional right to a public trial and to confront one's accusers.

Five media companies, including the Associated Press, the *New York Times*, and Dow Jones and Co., filed a complaint November 21 that they are being denied access to military trial proceedings against Khadr in violation of First

Continued on page 8

NATO calls for more troops in Afghanistan

Imperialist forces step up assault on Pakistan border



U.S. Army/Staff Sgt. Michael L. Casteel

U.S. soldiers in combat August 20 near village of Allah Say in eastern Afghanistan

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

TORONTO—Canadian general Ray Henault, chairman of NATO's military committee, said November 14 that NATO forces in Afghanistan must be beefed up in order to make progress in their war in that country. He issued his statement after a series of meetings of the imperialist military alliance designed to drum up reinforcements for NATO's occupation force of 41,000 in Afghanistan.

Although the deployment of imperialist troops has been increased by 8,500 this year, "NATO commanders on the ground say they need more helicopters, planes, and mobile units to step up the fight against the Taliban," the Associated Press reported.

Washington and Ottawa are pressing for other imperialist governments to increase their commitments of troops and equipment in Afghanistan in face

Continued on page 9

Demonstrators in Atlanta: Stop execution of Troy Davis!



Militant/Clay Dennison

Martina Correia, whose brother Troy Davis is on death row on false charges of murdering a policeman, speaks at November 13 press conference outside Georgia Supreme Court.

BY DENICE WADE AND CLAY DENNISON

ATLANTA—"It's sad for us to say that in the United States it's not unconstitutional to execute an innocent person if the state believes that they got a fair trial," said Martina Correia, speaking to the media here at a November 11 rally on the steps of the Georgia state Capitol. Correia's brother Troy Davis, a 38-year-old Black man, faces the death penalty on false charges of murdering a white policeman.

On November 13, 100 supporters of Davis packed a courtroom and an over-

Continued on page 3

Imperialists back 'supervised independence' for Kosova

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

As a December 10 United Nations review of Kosova's status looms, officials of the U.S. government and the European Union are pushing a UN plan for "supervised independence" for the province, which has been occupied by UN and NATO troops since 1999.

Albanians make up 90 percent of the population of Kosova, which was an autonomous region of Serbia until 1989. Under the impact of the 1942–46 Yugoslav revolution, Albanians won recognition of language and cultural rights, but the social and economic development of the region was stunted by the policies of the Stalinist misleadership of the workers state. Just before the formal breakup of Yugoslavia, for example, only 124 people per 1,000 in Kosova were employed. The figure was 292 per 1,000 for all of Yugoslavia.

As the ruling apparatuses in Yugoslavia began crumbling in the late 1980s, rival sections of the bureaucracy used nationalist demagogy to justify their grabs for land and resources. Competing Stalinist gangs pitted Serbs, Albanians, Croatians, Bosnians, and other nationalities against each other. In 1989, Belgrade revoked Kosova's autonomy.

The Serbian government, led by Slobodan Milosevic, imposed a state of emergency on Kosova that lasted 10 years. In 1999, Belgrade unleashed an "ethnic cleansing" campaign, killing up to 12,000 people, mostly Albanians, and expelling 1 million from Kosova. Washington and other impe-

Continued on page 3

Also Inside:

Protests in Australia

Continued from front page

bor Party support.

Some Aborigines have supported the intervention, hoping the federal action would address social problems such as alcohol-related violence, and bring increased government spending to their communities.

Opposition to the government's sweeping measures, however, has mounted among indigenous leaders around the country. In September a meeting of 100 Aboriginal activists in Alice Springs formed the National Aboriginal Alliance to oppose the takeover.

In the remote areas of the Northern Territory, where high unemployment is rampant, the government's main jobs program has been abolished, forcing thousands more onto welfare. Welfare payments for all Aborigines living on Aboriginal land are now controlled by government bureaucrats. Federally appointed administrators with wide powers have been imposed. The permit system, by which Aboriginal communities in the Territory controlled entry onto their land and settlements, has been abolished.

Olga Havnen, a leader of the National Aboriginal Alliance, said in a message to the protesters in Sydney that the "only visible change in most communities has been the construction of housing for government business managers." She noted, "There have been no new charges laid in connection with child sexual abuse."

Valerie Napaljarri Martin, who is from Yuendumu, an Aboriginal town of 800 in the Northern Territory, came to the Sydney protest along with Harry Jakkamarra Nelson, president of the Yuendumu Community Council, and Barbara Shaw from Tangentyere Council, the representative body for the Town Camps, as the Aboriginal communities around Alice Springs are called.

Attack on gains from 1970s

The Town Camps began as segregated shantytowns, since Aborigines were legally barred from living in Alice Springs until 1964. Shaw pointed to the gains made by the Tangentyere Council since it was established in the 1970s. Aborigines won indigenous leases for the Town Camps, the construction of brick houses to replace the shacks, and social services. "We want to keep our homes and keep our camps," she said.

Several hundred residents gathered May 25 in Alice Springs to support the Tangentyere Council's rejection of A$60 million ($52 million) offered by Canberra to improve housing and services. In exchange for the money, the federal government would take back control of housing in Town Camps.

Shaw said she now lived in a "prescribed" area where a $1,000 fine is imposed if alcohol is brought into the community. "They haven't thought about rehabilitation [for alcoholics], but they're extending the jails," she remarked.



Militant/Bob Aiken

Hundreds protested in Sydney November 18 against the Australian federal government's racist takeover of Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory.

Nelson was part of a delegation of Aboriginal elders that traveled to Canberra in August to lobby against the new laws. In October he chaired a meeting of Warlpiri tribal elders in Yuendumu that issued the first united statement by an Aboriginal language group against the takeover. "This intervention has hit us like a ton of bricks," Nelson said.

The Warlpiri elders said, "Our communities have been overwhelmed by the large number of changes and have been placed under enormous pressure and stress. We ask political leaders from all parties to show Aboriginal people respect and to talk to us about how we can make a new start to the intervention after the election."

Further actions are planned for January 26, the Australia Day public holiday, known by many Aborigines as "Survival Day."

New Zealand: manager charged in fatal mine flood

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The trial of a coal mine manager charged with negligence in the death of a miner ended November 7 in the town of Greymouth, on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island.

Robert McGowan, 39, was killed in March 2006 at the nonunion Black Reef mine when a flood of water and rock from an abandoned adjacent mine burst into his work area. Mine manager Gary Haddow, who was working alongside McGowan, survived by leaping and grabbing a roof bolt.

The Department of Labour charged Haddow, together with a geologist whose name has not been released, of "failing to ensure the safety of those working in the mine." The owner of Black Reef Mine Ltd. has already pleaded guilty to similar charges.

"I don't really see it as a victory," Valma McGowan, widow of the dead miner, told the *Militant* November 7. "The company plea-bargained nine charges, including two against mine owner Shane Bocock, down to two. Robert never got to plea bargain for his life." She has spearheaded a campaign to hold the company and government officials accountable for his death.

In his testimony, government health and safety inspector David Bellet explained that mine companies have 12 months after opening a mine to supply the Labour Department with a copy of their mining plan. Black Reef Mine was still within the 12-month period.

Mines inspector Bill Taylor told the court that the mine warranted only one visit every six months, based on Labour Department criteria of "risk factors," the number of people employed, the workings of shifts, and the amounts of explosives used.

Judge James Weir has reserved his decision in the case, meaning that the ruling may not be issued until next year.

"The court hearing has bought to light the inadequacies in the mining regulations," said Valma McGowan. She noted that "the Department of Labour cannot prosecute itself—to hold them to account I would have to take a private prosecution."

The Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union, which organizes coal miners, called for the reinstatement of mine check inspectors, who are onsite at all times during mining.

McGowan was one of two miners killed last year on the West Coast. Rising demand for high-quality coal has led to an export boom and an expansion of mining in the region.

THE MILITANT

Imperialist troops out of Afghanistan!

More than 6,000 people have been killed in 2007 in the imperialist slaughter in Afghanistan—the deadliest year to date. The 'Militant' has a consistent record campaigning for all imperialist troops out of Afghanistan. Don't miss an issue of this coverage.



Afghans protest March 4 after U.S. troops killed 12 civilians and wounded 35.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Africa solidarity meeting in Venezuela discusses imperialist exploitation

BY MAGGIE TROWE
AND ROGER CALERO

CARACAS, Venezuela—The Second Meeting of Intellectuals Africa-America was held here November 19–21. The gathering was hosted by the foreign ministry of Venezuela and other government institutions as part of the Second Cultural Festival with the People of Africa.

Government officials, academics, political activists, and others, from 22 countries in Africa and 19 in the Americas, took part in the event.

Participants, who represented a broad political spectrum, discussed the impact of unfair trade practices imposed by imperialism on African countries; the devastating conditions faced by millions of working people in Africa, as well as those living abroad; and the need to deepen solidarity between the peoples in the two continents.

At a workshop titled "African Diaspora," Onunaiju Okechukwu of Nigeria noted that imperialist plunder and exploitative class relations in African states today are simply carryovers from colonial days. "Exploitation of natural and human resources has deepened since independence," he said.

In Equatorial Guinea, the imperialist powers have imposed terms favorable to foreign companies for the extraction of wood and oil, said Maximiliano Meñe.

A delegate from Western Sahara pointed out that 30 percent of Africans live on less than $1 per day.

Venezuelan participants described initiatives by the Venezuelan government to facilitate greater integration of Latin American countries by developing energy, communication, and other projects.

In one of the sessions Venezuelan minister of education Aristóbulo Istúriz reviewed advances made in Venezuela to increase access to education. Fifty percent of the population of 26 million is studying, said Istúriz. Of those, 3 million are enrolled in literacy programs, and 10 million in grade school and university.

"We could not have eliminated illiteracy without Cuba, however," said Istúriz, highlighting Cuba's collaboration with Venezuela in developing educational programs. "We could not have provided medical care to millions."

He also said that as a result of the class struggle in Venezuela, and the role of Afro Venezuelans coming to the fore in that struggle, the existing racial discrimination against Afro descendants has come more to the surface.

"We were naïve about the fight against racism, discrimination, and exclusion. We thought that everyone would understand it as a just struggle," he said.

Many in Venezuela argue that racism does not exist in the country, and that all are treated equally regardless of their skin color, while others, especially those of African origin, are urging action to combat racism.

The festival also included a number of public events—a parade, a cultural evening, and art exhibits, as well as a program in which African dance, theater, and other artistic groups visited schools and gave performances.

Omari Musa contributed to this article.

CALENDAR

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

Tsukimi Kai Reception and Program. Premiere screening of Tsukimi Kai video covering group's last trip to Cuba. Also presentations on Japanese in the Cuban Revolution, Race and Identity in Cuba, and Cuba's Future, and report by Barbara Morita on the International Disaster Preparedness Conference in Cuba. Sat., Dec. 15. 2 p.m. *National Japanese American Historical Society, 1684 Post St. Tel: (415) 921-5007. website: www.njahs.org.*

CORRECTION

The calendar in the December 10 issue incorrectly listed Hamado Ouaedrago as a speaker for the December 9 program in Athens, Greece, titled "Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution 1983–1987."

Venezuela: constitutional referendum fails



Getty Images/Mario Tama

A package of 69 amendments to Venezuela's constitution proposed by president Hugo Chávez and his supporters failed in a December 2 referendum, with 51 percent voting against. The wide-ranging proposals included changes to the country's political, territorial, and military organization; laws that increase executive powers such as bringing the Central Bank under direct presidential control; and other measures like bringing self-employed workers under the state social security system. Total voter turnout was 56 percent, with some 3 million who voted in last year's presidential election staying away from the polls. Above, residents of Petare, a working-class neighborhood in Caracas, line up to vote.

—DOUG NELSON

'Supervised independence' plan for Kosova

Continued from front page

rialist governments bombed Yugoslavia for 78 days and then sent in troops, claiming this was to stop the violence. But the imperialist powers had in fact fomented the violence for years.

Kosova has been "administered" by the United Nations—and thousands of foreign troops and cops—ever since. The occupiers have slowed down initiatives for self-rule and fanned the flames of ethnic divisions. The European Union (EU) now proposes a plan whereby the UN administration of Kosova would be replaced by an EU administration. NATO and EU troops, some 16,000 of which are stationed among Kosova's 2.1 million people, would remain.

The EU administration would supervise the implementation of a UN plan through which Kosova would have its own constitution, police force, and army, and be eligible to apply for membership in the United Nations and the EU. The "independent" Kosovar government would be supervised by the EU, and "key elements" of the constitution would be prescribed by the United Nations.

The UN plan singles out Kosova as a unique case that "does not create a precedent for other unresolved conflicts." The stipulation reflects fears by capitalist rulers in Greece and Turkey especially, and by aspiring capitalists in Russia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and elsewhere, that an independent Kosova would inspire self-determination struggles by other oppressed nationalities, especially in the Balkans.

Kosova's government has allied itself with Washington and the European Union in hopes that they will push for Kosovar independence and counter the Serbian government and its backers in Moscow. But such a pro-imperialist stance is not universally popular, especially among those fighting for self-determination for Kosova.

"Even if the European Union replaces the United Nations, Kosova would still be controlled by international powers," Albin Kurti, a leader of the group Vetevendosja, told the Vienna *Die Presse* newspaper. Vetevendosja means self-determination in Albanian. Kurti said the Kosovar government would not declare independence "as long as the international powers do not accept that." Jailed in February for leading a demonstration against the United Nations, Kurti is currently under house arrest.

Vetevendosja has led demonstrations against the occupation forces and for self-determination. A November 18 article in the *Washington Post* takes note of the group's increasing popularity. It reports that 50 percent of Kosova's population says they are ready to participate in protests against the United Nations.

"Not a ruling UN mission in Kosova, but a diplomatic mission of Kosova in the UN," wrote Kurti in a November 24 statement. "Self-determination, only self-determination makes this possible."

Atlanta rally for Troy Davis

Continued from front page

flow area to observe arguments before the Georgia State Supreme Court on whether Troy Davis should receive a new trial.

The campaign to save Davis's life has gained broad support, including from Nobel laureate Desmond Tutu, Georgia congressman John Lewis, Amnesty International, and Pope Benedict XVI.

Davis, convicted of the 1989 murder of an off-duty police officer, has been in prison for more than 18 years. He was to be executed July 17 but at the 11th hour received a 90-day stay of execution.

With no evidence of a murder weapon or other physical evidence to prove guilt, the case has relied on witness accounts. Since the trial, however, seven of the nine witnesses who testified against Davis have recanted their statements and four new witnesses have come forward to say someone else committed the killing.

"The state has never had a case of this magnitude with such recantations," Jason Ewart, Davis's defense attorney, told the court.

Acknowledging the impact of the campaign to win justice for Davis, Chatham County Chief Assistant District Attorney David Lock told the court, "We lost the media battle in this case."

Nonetheless, the prosecutors continue to argue for the execution of Davis. They say new evidence and the witness recantations should not be considered, in part because they were introduced after a legal time limit.

"It should not be a consideration about when these witness recantations took place," Correia said in an interview. "What needs to be addressed is, should someone's life be at risk over procedural technicalities? This is someone's life hanging in the balance. There is no just way to kill an innocent man."

Correia said Davis's supporters continue campaigning to tell the truth about the case. "We need people from all over to be writing to newspapers and calling in to the radio," she said.

A decision by the Georgia Supreme Court on whether to hold a new trial for Davis is expected by January.

Information on the defense campaign can be found at www.troyanthonydavis.org. Letters can be sent to him at: Troy A. Davis 657378, GDCT G-3-79, P.O. Box 3877, Jackson, GA 30233.

Robert Simms: 38 years in communist movement

BY JOE YOUNG

TORONTO—Robert Simms, a cadre and leader of the communist movement in Canada for four decades, died here on December 4 from heart failure. He was 61 years old.

Simms was born in Montreal and grew up in New Brunswick before moving to Ottawa. In Ottawa he became involved in the anti–Vietnam War movement and joined the Young Socialists in 1969. Within months, he moved to Vancouver to help build the communist movement there.

Simms played an active part in the 1977 fusion of four organizations to form the Revolutionary Workers League, the predecessor of the Communist League.

From the early 1980s to the early 1990s he was part of building the Communist League in Quebec, where its cadres were deeply involved in struggles for the rights of the Quebecois. He served on the Political Com-

Continued on page 9



Militant/John Steele

Robert Simms staffing Pathfinder booth at Middle East Studies Association Conference in Montreal November 18.

Young Socialists hold national meeting in N.Y.



Militant/Eric Simpson

Youth snap up communist books at Young Socialists table in New York December 1.

This column is written and edited by members of the Young Socialists, a revolutionary socialist youth organization. For more information contact the YS at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018; Tel.: (212) 629-6649; e-mail: youngsocialists@mac.com.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN ACTION

BY EDDIE BECK

NEW YORK, December 2—The Young Socialists held a national meeting here today to discuss tasks and perspectives for the next period in building a revolutionary communist youth organization.

In attendance were YS members from across the United States, representatives from the YS in Australia and Canada, and youth interested in joining the organization from Atlanta, New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Twin Cities.

Ben O'Shaughnessy, the organizer of the YS National Steering Committee, presented the political report.

"The main task for the organization in the coming period is to become more structured, organized, and proletarian in our functioning and to build strong chapters across the country," he said.

O'Shaughnessy pointed to the recent work by members of the YS, the Socialist Workers Party, and others to organize meetings about the Pathfinder book *Our History Is Still Being Written*. He said that one of biggest successes of these meetings has been the broad sponsorship and participation by professors, students, activists in the Asian community, and others who previously knew little about the Cuban Revolution.

O'Shaughnessy also highlighted the work this fall to bring new forces into the campaign to free the five Cuban revolutionaries in U.S. prisons.

"The Cuban Five are our comrades here on the front lines of the class struggle with us," said O'Shaughnessy. "We want to work with others to continue broadening support for their freedom."

With the upcoming 2008 presidential elections, O'Shaughnessy said the Young Socialists will be preparing to support the Socialist Workers Party candidates at the national, state, and local level. In many states, Young Socialists will stand as candidates on the SWP ticket. He also said the YS will discuss launching a young socialists support group for the soon-to-be-announced SWP presidential ticket, which will include other youth looking to back the communist campaign.

"One of the main priorities in the next period will be to strengthen and build the YS national center in New York City," said O'Shaughnessy. He reported on recent transfers by YS members to not only strengthen the national center, but also the work of the communist movement in Georgia.

After the discussion, the YS elected a new National Steering Committee based in New York City. Its members are Tom Baumann, Eddie Beck, Maura DeLuca, Ben Joyce, and Ben O'Shaughnessy.

ON THE PICKET LINE

Broadway stagehands return to work after 19-day strike

NEW YORK, November 30—After shutting down Broadway for two and a half weeks during the height of the holiday season, striking stagehands returned to work yesterday. They are set to vote on a contract December 9. The members of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 1 went on strike November 10 in the face of sweeping concessions demanded by the bosses' association, the League of American Theaters and Producers. The League had amassed a $20 million fund in anticipation of the strike.

Union officials would not comment on the details of the proposed pact. According to the Associated Press, the contract includes some of the work-rule concessions that were at the center of the employers' drive. It also reportedly includes a higher wage increase than the original offer.

—Paul Pederson

Auto workers strike Ford in St. Petersburg, Russia

November 30—Hundreds of auto workers have been picketing a Ford plant near St. Petersburg, Russia, since 1,500 walked out November 20. The workers are demanding the shortening of the night shift from 7.5 hours to 6.5 hours and a 30 percent wage increase to keep pace with soaring inflation.

"Month after month, workers see their monthly take-home pay eaten away by high prices for goods and services," Sergei Khramov, chairman of the independent labor federation SotsProf, told the *International Herald Tribune*. Annual inflation in Russia is expected to reach 11 percent this year. The central bank estimates that the price of bread has increased by 22.7 percent.Workers at the Ford plant won 14 to 20 percent wage increases after a one-day strike in February.

Ford began limited production November 28 using line-crossers. The pickets countered by getting the vehicle identification numbers of the cars produced during the strike and publicizing them.

A St. Petersburg car dealer told the Itar-Tass news agency that prospective buyers "have already phoned, saying they did not want to purchase cars assembled during the strike."

—Paul Pederson

Steelworkers in Delaware resist company lockout

YORKLYN, Delaware—Members of United Steelworkers Local 4-770 have been picketing the National Vulcanized Fibre plant here since they were locked out October 19. The company shut down production at the plant without giving the required 90-day notice and stopped paying into the state workers compensation fund, workers say. According to the *Delaware News Journal*, the company—which manufactures rubber-coated fiber used in electronics, helmets, and many other products—shrank from a workforce of 1,800 in the 1960s to several dozen workers today.

—K.B. Inglee

'Militant' Fund hits $107,625

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Every area met or surpassed their goals, making the $100,000 *Militant* Fund a success. With the last donations tallied, $107,625 has been received—8 percent over the goal. The final scoreboard appears below.

Widening the number of *Militant* readers actively involved in raising funds for the paper was the key to supporters of the socialist newsweekly in Canada, who went nearly $2,000 over their goal of $4,100. They systematically approached a list of long-term *Militant* readers about contributing to the fund.

During the last week of the drive, *Militant* supporters in New York visited long-term subscribers to raise funds. Dan Fein visited a Cuban American reader who supports the Cuban Revolution. Upon hearing that pledges were $120 short of the local goal, this subscriber wrote a check to cover the amount. He said he enjoyed reading the paper's reports on the Venezuela book fair.

As in a number of other cities, the effort in Seattle was boosted by a successful public fund event held early in the campaign, reports John Naubert, the organizer of the fund there. The meeting featured *Militant* editorial volunteer Cindy Jaquith speaking on Iran. As a result of the meeting, a number of people who had already made pledges decided to increase them. Two doubled their contributions, Naubert wrote.

Organizing from day one to stay ahead of schedule in collecting contributions enabled *Militant* supporters in Philadelphia to successfully reach their goal. "That way we could not only stay on target, but as the fund progressed, it made it easier for contributors to raise their goal toward the end of the drive," wrote local fund organizer Janet Post.

Again, thanks and congratulations to all those who contributed and worked to make this campaign a success.

$100,000 'Militant' Fund Drive Final Scoreboard

Country	Quota	Paid	%
CANADA	4,100	6,020	147%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	600	950	158%
London	1,500	1,922	128%
UK total	2,100	2,872	137%
SWEDEN	700	877	125%
FRANCE	250	280	112%
UNITED STATES			
Pittsburgh	3,500	4,064	116%
Newark, NJ	3,500	3,985	114%
Washington, D.C.	2,800	3,135	112%
Twin Cities	4,700	5,131	109%
Miami	3,000	3,233	108%
Seattle	7,000	7,517	107%
San Francisco*	11,500	12,205	106%
Los Angeles*	9,000	9,446	105%
Des Moines, IA	2,000	2,084	104%
Houston	3,000	3,065	102%
Chicago*	7,000	7,080	101%
New York	15,000	15,168	101%
Philadelphia*	4,300	4,340	101%
Carrollton, GA	4,500	4,538	101%
Atlanta	4,500	4,537	101%
Boston	2,800	2,803	100%
Albany, NY	125	125	100%
U.S. total	88,225	92,444	105%
NEW ZEALAND	3,000	3,120	104%
AUSTRALIA*	1,750	1,750	100%
OTHER		250	
Intl'l totals	100,125	107,625	108%
Goal/Should be	100,000	100,000	100%

* Raised goal

N.Y. meeting discusses capitalist economic crisis, building communist party

BY CINDY JAQUITH

NEW YORK, December 2—About 400 people attended a public meeting here yesterday that took up the revolutionary potential of the U.S. working class and prospects for building an international communist movement as the capitalist economic crisis deepens. The featured speakers were the editor of *New International* magazine, Mary-Alice Waters, who recently returned from China and Venezuela, and Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party.

"The Cuban Revolution remains the only example of a living socialist revolution that is advancing in the world," said Waters at the opening of her remarks. "The conquest of political power by the proletariat represented by that revolution is the dividing line" in political discussions today.

The power of Cuba's example was reflected in the openness to *Our History Is Still Being Written* at the September 21–23 Sixth International Conference of Overseas Chinese, held at Peking University in China. At the conference, reported Waters, copies of the book were sold to 3 people returning to Indonesia, 1 to Japan, 1 to Hong Kong, 6 to Singapore, 1 to Peru, 1 to the Czech Republic, and 2 to the United States.

The book contains interviews with three Chinese-Cuban generals about how the Cuban Revolution transformed the lives of ordinary Chinese Cubans and all working people.

Our History Is Still Being Written is a weapon for Asians looking for a revolutionary perspective, Waters noted. She described recent meetings centered around the book in Houston, San Francisco, and Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland, that have opened the doors to further opportunities to discuss the example of the Cuban Revolution amongst Asians and Asian Americans.

Political debate in Venezuela

The Cuban example and the revolutionary capacity of the working class were also at the heart of debates and discussions at the Third Venezuela International Book Fair in Caracas, November 9–18.

A five-day rolling panel took up the theme "United States: A possible revolution." Waters was one of the speakers. Over the following days a debate ensued centered on four questions, she said: the revolutionary capacity of the U.S. working class; the nature of the first and second American revolutions; rejection of the Stalinist methods of Jew-baiting, agent-baiting, and thuggery; and the Cuban road of socialist revolution. (Readers can follow this debate on pages 6–8 and in the November 26, December 3, and December 10, 2007, issues of the *Militant*.)

Waters described how communists are effectively carrying out political work around the world by using such books. This is done not simply by publishing the books, but by the worker-Bolsheviks who are the human agents getting these titles into the hands of workers and youth across the globe, she said.

She announced that Pathfinder will publish its first books in Arabic in the near future, beginning with *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* and followed by *The Communist Manifesto*.

Fighting for working-class unity

In his talk, Barnes described how the capitalist offensive against the working class compels many workers to band together to defend themselves, at the same time that others pin their hopes on capital.

In voting for recent contracts with Ford, Chrysler, and GM, he said, "thousands of auto workers hardened their hearts against fellow workers." Unionists who voted for contracts ending the auto companies' responsibilities for retirees' health care and slashing wages of new hires by 50 percent "turned against solidarity. The act of doing that deepened the divisions in the working class."

Barnes said the contracts registered once again that those workers who will be in the vanguard of struggles are those who literally have nothing to lose.

He explained that a massive seizure of the financial and credit system is under way, the beginning of the worst recession in a quarter century.

In response to the spiraling foreclosure rate on homes that were purchased at "subprime" rates, the Bush administration and major U.S. financial institutions have come up with a plan they call the Hope Now Alliance, Barnes said. The plan would temporarily freeze the mortgage rates of only a minority of homeowners with subprime rates, while all others will see their mortgage payments go up by several hundred dollars a month within the next two years. "There is no 'housing crisis' for the ruling class," said Barnes. "The working class has a housing crisis. The ruling class has a mortgage crisis."

Barnes pointed out that Frederick Engels, one of the founders of the modern communist movement, explains in *The Housing Question* that home ownership by workers is one of the ways capitalism tries to hitch labor's fate to that of capital. This in turns inhibits the mobility and class consciousness of the worker as "free outlaw."



Militant/Eric Simpson

Inset: Audience at December 2 meeting in New York featuring presentations by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters. Above: Waters (right) and Barnes (background left) talk with participants following program.

Building Socialist Workers Party

The consequences of the unfolding economic crisis and how workers can defend themselves will be at the center of the Socialist Workers Party's 2008 election campaigns, Barnes said. The SWP candidates will explain the fight for a workers and farmers government and the need for labor to break with the twin capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans, and form a labor party. There is no way forward through militant trade union activity alone, or through the building of larger and larger social protest movements, the candidates will explain. The only road forward is political, through independent labor political action.

Barnes said that such a revolutionary approach will gain a hearing among workers and the young people attracted to their struggles. The disproportionate effect of the economic crisis on the working class is leading many workers to fight, Barnes noted. And many workers who want to fight are being attracted toward the SWP.

Barnes said that the challenge before the party is to win revolutionary-minded workers to the movement by fighting together with them on the job, in social protests, and wherever political opportunities arise. In doing so, party organizational forms that get in the way should be cast aside to focus on the political vanguard that is emerging.

A table of Marxist books available at a discount, set up by the Young Socialists, sold $578 worth of titles, mostly to young people. Youth and workers attracted to the communist movement came from New York; Washington, D.C.; Indianapolis; Atlanta; Doraville and Carrollton, Georgia; Los Angeles; Houston; Des Moines, Iowa; Philadelphia; Pittsburgh; Seattle; and the Twin Cities.

During the program, Dave Prince, a member of the SWP in Atlanta, announced that pledges to the party's 2007 Capital Fund have now reached $800,000. Some $100,000 of that total was pledged at yesterday's meeting. The Capital Fund accepts donations of $1,000 or more to help produce new books and keep the entire Pathfinder arsenal in print.

A separate "More-of-the-Same" fund appeal to enable the party to continue its work raised more than $15,000.

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December 17, 1982

Workers closed down factories, public transportation, mail delivery, and shops in Argentina for 24 hours on December 6 in the country's first general strike in six and one-half years of military rule. At least 90 percent of the country's 10 million workers defied President Reynaldo Bignone's administration to protest unemployment, inflation, and human rights violations.

In the face of this massive display of solidarity, the military regime made no move to break the strike called by all three of the country's labor federations.

On top of the worsening economic situation, there have been recent discoveries of mass graves of missing persons.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
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December 16, 1957

New York, Dec. 11—The men who drive New York's subway trains have gone on a strike which has slowed the transit system to a crawl and at the same time captured the imagination of the city's working class.

The strike by the Motormen's Benevolent Association, which claims a membership of 2,600 of the subway's 3,167 train engineers, is unique in a number of ways. The officials are working motormen. It is extremely militant. It is the only union to call a subway strike in 30 years.

At one o'clock in the morning, four hours before the strike deadline, four leaders of the MBA were dragged to a judge's home for sentencing to ten days in jail for violating the no-strike injunction.

THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

December 17, 1932

While the police of Washington were terrorizing the National Hunger Marchers who had come to the opening session of Congress to demand immediate relief and unemployment insurance, Hoover delivered his message to Congress. The message called for greater support for the bankers and a greater struggle against the workers. The highlights of the Hoover message called for: reorganization of the banking system for the bankers; greater centralization of the governmental apparatus in the interests of the imperialists. An 11 percent wage cut for the Federal employees; a cut for the Veteran Fund; reduction of government building and expense; and a sales tax to shift a greater share of the tax burden to the workers and the middle class.

‘Revolution in United States is not only pos

Remarks by SWP National Committee member Mary-Alice Waters at

The following remarks were presented by Mary-Alice Waters, a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and president of Pathfinder Press, at a November 10 panel discussion held in Caracas during the Third Venezuela International Book Fair. The panel kicked off a five-day rolling forum on the topic “The United States: A possible revolution,” which was the theme of the book fair itself, held November 9–18.

In addition to Waters, the panelists at the forum on the opening day included Eva Golinger, a Venezuelan-American lawyer and author of The Chávez Code*; Chris Carlson, a contributor to the venezuelanalysis.com website; and Tufara Waller, cultural program coordinator of the Highlander Center in Tennessee. The issues joined at that session remained at the center of the debate throughout the five days. (See coverage of the forum and book fair in the previous three issues of the* Militant.*)*

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BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

First of all, I want to thank CENAL (the National Book Center) and the organizers of the 2007 Venezuela Book Fair for their choice of the theme for this event. “The United States: A possible revolution” opens discussion on a question the answer to which, in practice, will ultimately determine the future of humanity—or more accurately perhaps, whether there *is* a future for humanity.

I am speaking here today as one of a small minority, including among those who call themselves leftists, or revolutionaries, a minority that says without hesitation or qualification, “Yes, revolution *is* possible in the United States.” Socialist revolution. To put it in class terms, a proletarian revolution—the broadest, most inclusive social upheaval of the oppressed and exploited imaginable, and the reorganization of society in their interests.

It will be a mass revolutionary struggle that, as it deepens, will win the support of the *majority* of the working class, small farmers, and other exploited producers and their powerful allies among oppressed nationalities, women, and others. A revolutionary struggle that will be led by an increasingly class-conscious, tested, and expanding political vanguard of the working class.

In the coming, third American revolution workers who are African American will be a disproportionately large component of the leadership.

It will be a revolutionary struggle that takes political and military power from the class that today holds it, mobilizing the strength and solidarity—the humanity—of working people in the United States on the side of the oppressed and exploited worldwide.

It will be a struggle that transforms the men and women who carry it forward as they fight to transform the social relations inherited from the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism.

Not only is a revolution *possible* in the United States, but revolutionary struggle by the toilers along the course I just described is *inevitable*. It will be initiated at first not by the toilers, but forced upon us by the crisis-driven assaults of the propertied classes. And our struggles will be intertwined, as always, with the resistance and struggles of other oppressed and exploited producers around the globe.

What is *not* inevitable, however, is the outcome of these coming revolutionary struggles. That is where political clarity, organization, discipline, and the caliber of proletarian leadership become decisive. That is why what we do *now*, while there is time to prepare, weighs so heavily.

I wanted to assert this at the start so our discussion here at this event can share a common vocabulary. This is the meaningful content I give the oft-abused word “revolution.”

Cuba and Coming American Revolution

One of the books being presented at this festival by Monte Avila, one of the leading publishers here in Venezuela, bears the title *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution.* It was written by Jack Barnes and first published by Pathfinder Press. I mention it at the outset not just to salute the editors of Monte Avila for their political perspicacity, and perhaps audacity, in publishing it. More importantly, I want to introduce its theme as a part of our discussion.

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution is not primarily a book about the Cuban Revolution that triumphed on January 1, 1959—although it *is* about the worldwide impact of that revolution. As the back cover notes, it is, above all, “about the struggles of working people in the imperialist heartland, the youth who are attracted to them, and the example set by the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary, it can be made.

“It is [a book] about the class struggle in the United States, where the revolutionary capacities of workers and farmers are today as utterly discounted by the ruling powers as were those of the Cuban toilers. And just as wrongly.”

The book highlights a statement Cuban leader Fidel Castro made almost 47 years ago, on the eve of the U.S.-organized invasion of Cuba at the Bay on Pigs.

That abortive April 1961 assault was undoubtedly imperialism’s greatest miscalculation in the history of our hemisphere, a blunder born of colossal class arrogance and class blindness on the part of those who considered themselves to be the rightful owners of all that the land and the toilers of Cuba together produced. That miscalculation ended at Playa Girón in the glory of the first military defeat of Washington in the Americas.

A month before, in March 1961, Fidel told a cheering crowd of Cuban workers, farmers, and youth, “There will be a victorious revolution in the United States before a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba.”

At the time, many of us on both sides of the Florida Straits knew those words were not empty bravado, nor was Fidel gazing in a crystal ball. He was speaking as a leader offering—*advancing*—a line of struggle for our lifetimes, in both the United States and Cuba.

Each succeeding generation of revolutionaries has carried those words on our banner ever since, with the determination to speed the day they will be fully realized.

Today, that flag is being held high by five Cuban revolutionaries now in their tenth year of imprisonment in the United States, where they are being held hostage by the U.S. government as one more way to try to punish the people of Cuba for their refusal to surrender.

This new edition of *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* is dedicated to them. To “Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando, and René—five exemplary products of the Cuban Revolution who today, even if against their will, serve with honor on the front lines of the class struggle in the United States.”

The fight for their freedom is another of the struggles that will be advanced by our deliberations and our actions here.

A crises-free capitalist world?

Today, above all, I want to address my remarks, with all due respect, to those who doubt that socialist revolution in the United States is possible—to those who believe, or fear, that U.S. imperialism is too powerful, and that revolution is at best a utopian dream.

To those who harbor those doubts, I will pose a question.

What assumptions about the future, explicit or implicit, could justify such a conclusion? What would the future have to look like?

I hope others here will address this as well. But I would like to give my answer. To reach that conclusion, you would have to believe that the coming decades are going to look more or less like those we knew for nearly half a century following World War II.

You would have to believe that there won’t again be economic or social crises on the order of those that marked the first half of the twentieth century. That the ruling families of the imperialist world and their economic wizards have found a way to “manage” capitalism so as to preclude shattering financial crises that could lead to something akin to the Great Depression, to growing assaults on the economic, social, and political rights of the toilers, to spreading imperialist war, to the rise of mass fascist movements in the streets.

You would have to be convinced that competition among the imperialist rivals, as well as between them and the more economically advanced semicolonial powers, is diminishing and that their profit rates, which have been on a downward trend since the early 1970s, are now going to begin to rise for several decades on an accelerated curve.

You would have to believe that such a reversal in their accumulation of capital can be accomplished without the massive destruction of productive capacity—human and physical—wrought by decades of war, such as those that culminated in the interimperialist slaughter of World War II. That is what was necessary for the capitalist rulers to get out of the last great depression.

I believe the evidence is overwhelming that the future we face is the opposite. Just read the headlines this last week! Think about what is happening from Wall Street to Pakistan, from Moscow to Tehran, from the Shanghai stock exchange to the ever-deeper gold mines of South Africa.



Militant/Ben O’Shaughnessy

Opening panelists at “United States: A possible revolution,” the central forum of the Venezuela International Book Fair held in Caracas, November 9–18. From left, Venezuelan-American lawyer and author of *The Chávez Code,* Eva Golinger; panel moderator Luis Bilbao, an Argentine-born journalist; and Mary-Alice Waters, a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and president of Pathfinder Press.



A revolutionary struggle in the United States “will be initiated at first not by the toilers, but forced upon us by the crisis-driven assaults of the propertied classes,” says Waters. Above, millions of working people face losing their homes as a result of the capitalist “subprime” mortgage crisis.

sible, revolutionary struggle is inevitable'

t Venezuela book fair forum on 'United States: A possible revolution'

The opening guns of World War III are already a decade and a half *behind* us. We are already living through the opening stages of what will be many years of bloody wars beginning with ones like those in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Iraq again. That is what the transformation of Washington's military structure and strategy is all about.

What is coming are years of economic and financial crises of which the current, still-expanding sub-prime mortgage crisis, and the even more massive debt balloon it is part of, offer only a hint.

What is coming are years that will bring increasingly conscious and organized resistance by a growing vanguard of working people pushed to the wall by the bosses' drive to cut wages and increase what they call productivity.

What is coming are years punctuated by street battles with genuine ultrarightist movements aimed against Blacks, immigrants, Jews, union militants, socialists, and others—in even the most "stable" of bourgeois democracies.

What is coming are years of economic, social, and political crises and intensifying class struggle that *will* end in World War III, inevitably, *if* the only class that is capable of doing so, the working class, fails to take state power, and thus the power to wage war, out of the hands of the imperialist rulers.

"A fighting vanguard of the working class has emerged in action in the United States"

A fighting working-class vanguard

In the United States, the outlines of these coming battles can already be seen. The historic shift is not ahead of us, it is already occurring.

The most important political development in the United States is something you rarely see images of on your TV screen or read about in the press. Its power has been expressed, however, by the millions of workers who have taken to the streets in cities and towns large and small across the breadth of the country the last two years on May Day, as that historic working-class holiday has been reborn in the United States as a day of *struggle*.

A fighting vanguard of the working class has emerged in action in the U.S.—taking the rulers by surprise, as registered in their divisions and heated debates over immigration policy. That vanguard is already placing its mark on politics and the class struggle.

This historic shift has increasingly manifested itself in strikes and organizing battles in factories and workplaces from California to Iowa, from Georgia to Utah. Working people, immigrant and U.S.-born, have stood shoulder to shoulder—sometimes in the streets, sometimes inside their factories, and sometimes in front of their neighbors' homes—in face of police raids by immigration cops picking off individuals for deportation or on criminal charges of "identity theft" in an attempt to intimidate all. Not just all immigrants, but in fact all workers.

This is not simply an "immigrant" vanguard, although, right now, it is substantially composed of workers who were born outside the United States, from Mexico and Central America especially. The workers who are helping each other hide from *la migra* in factories, however, and taking in each other's children when their parents are picked up, are not immigrants alone.

This is a *working-class* vanguard. It starts out small relative to the size of the working class as a whole. But it doesn't come out of the blue. It has developed in response to the employers' quarter-century-long antilabor offensive driving down wages and all social security protections, imposing literally life-threatening production speeds, and denying simple dignity to working people on and off the job.

Part of this offensive has been the bosses' oft-times organized efforts to secure themselves an expanding supply of undocumented workers—low-paid and nonunion—simultaneously filling their labor needs and providing a wedge to use in attempting to further divide and stratify the working class.

This is not to paint a rose-colored picture of the class struggle in the United States. My aim is not to convince you that the working class is on the offensive or anything like that.

To the contrary, it is the employing class that remains on the offensive. Most labor battles end in defeats or standoffs at best. The unions—which organize a declining percentage of those working in the United States—increasingly become instruments of the bosses' collaborators in the officialdom. This has been demonstrated once again in the last weeks by the wretched agreements negotiated with the auto industry giants, freeing the employers from responsibility for retirees' future health care needs and capitulating to the bosses' demands for a substantially lower wage scale for new hires working side by side with current employees *doing the very same jobs.*

It's no wonder that today in the U.S. fewer than 7.5 percent of workers in private industry are unionized—down from nearly a third of the private work force a half a century ago, and going lower.

But none of this is new.

What *is* new, what *is* changing, what *is* of historic importance, is the rapidly shifting character, composition, and dynamics of the U.S. working class. This is the biggest problem the U.S. rulers face. It is ultimately a bigger crisis for them than Iraq or Afghanistan—because it is more enduring.

The capitalist rulers can, and at some point will, temporarily pull back from any single front in the "global war on terrorism." They can and will make adjustments in their relations with their European rivals, and negotiate tradeoffs with Russia or China. They still have plenty of room to maneuver.

But the working class in the United States, including its expanding immigrant component—some 12 million of whom are undocumented—is something else. That is the source of the bulk of their surplus value, which in turn is the source of their profits, wealth, position, and state power. They utterly depend on this massive pool of superexploited labor. They cannot compete and accumulate capital without it.



Militant/Dean Hazlewood

Members of UNITE HERE at Prudential Overall plant in Commerce, California, picket October 5 in solidarity with strikers at plants in Vista and Milpitas, California. "Although right now substantially composed of workers who were born outside the United States, this is not simply an 'immigrant' vanguard," says Waters. "This is a working-class vanguard."

And that fact underlies the increasing confidence, combativity, and politicization of layers within the broad working-class movement in the U.S. today.

The battle to win the vast majority of the working class to support for the legalization of undocumented immigrants is the most important political question in the United States, and the largest current battle on the road to independent working-class political action.

And it *is* a battle. Many workers—white, Black, Asian, all—are influenced by the virulent anti-immigrant campaign of sections of the ruling class. This is an issue that is determining the future of the working-class movement and will continue to do so—much like the fight against Jim Crow segregation did in the 1950s and 1960s, and the ongoing fight against racism and all forms of discrimination still does.

One of the most crucial fronts of this battle, it should be emphasized, is within the Black community, where the divide-and-rule strategies of the rulers often find an echo—despite the fact that life experience and historical memory prepare the vast majority of African-American workers as natural allies of those fighting for immigrant rights.

Workers in the United States, wherever they were born, face the same class enemy, and determined struggles on any front tend to pull workers together in face of the attempts to divide us. And that is what *is* beginning to happen.

The massive, national, Black-led march on Jena, Louisiana, two months ago by some 20,000 demonstrators, Black, white, Latino and more, native-born and immigrant, protesting the unjust treatment handed out by the courts to six Black teenagers in that town, is a good example of the ways in which the growing proletarian resistance in the United States has already been registered in the renewed strength of a broader fighting vanguard. It was the first national action of its size and character in decades in the United States, and the march on Jena was undoubtedly nourished by the power of the recent May Day mobilizations and related actions.

Many of the young Latino workers proudly participating in that action were learning firsthand, and for the first time, of the history of struggles by working people in the U.S. against Black oppression. And the enthusiastic welcome extended to them by their fellow marchers had a powerful impact on all.

The attempts of the employers to turn

Continued on page 8

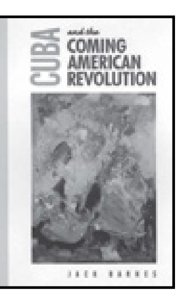
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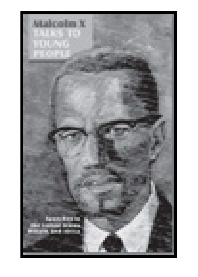
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Coming American revolution

Continued from page 7

immigrant workers—among others—into scapegoats in order to guarantee the availability of their pool of superexploited labor will not cease. Any sharp economic crisis will intensify the battle for the political soul of the working class on this and other questions.

Unlike previous periods in U.S. history, however, when the rulers were successful in radically dividing working people along lines of race and national origin—as in the aftermath of the defeat of Radical Reconstruction following the Civil War, or after World War I—it is precisely the unprecedented internationalization of labor, the vast scope of working-class migration, dwarfing the great waves of the 19th and early 20th centuries, that is today one of our greatest strengths.

We learn from the traditions of struggle coming together from all parts of the world. As we fight shoulder to shoulder, it becomes harder for the bosses to pit "us" against "them." It becomes more possible to see that our class interests are not the same as those of "our" bosses, "our" government, or "our" two parties.

Revolutionary continuity

As decades of deepening crises and intensifying class struggle open ahead of us, we have something else in our favor. The revolutionary potential of the last period of great radicalization in the 1930s was squandered and diverted into support for capitalism's "New Deal" and then its inevitable successor the "War Deal"—the imperialist slaughter of World War II.

It was the resources and attraction of a powerful bureaucratic social caste in the USSR camouflaging itself as a communist leadership on a world scale that made this possible. Today, however, that enormous political obstacle no longer stands across the road toward independent working-class political action. Imperialism can no longer rely on it as an enforcer of peaceful co-existence, of "spheres of influence" around the globe. And the most combative and courageous leaders of working-class battles, of national liberation movements, of radicalizing youth, will not be drawn toward the Stalinist negation of everything Marx and Engels and Lenin fought for, falsely believing that was communism.

The lessons of the Russian Revolution and the Communist International under Lenin will be sought after once again as new generations of vanguard fighters search for previous historical experiences from which they can learn not only how to fight but how to fight *to win*.

That is why, as these battles politically deepen, the real history of the Cuban Revolution too will again be increasingly sought after.

Why has the Cuban Revolution followed a completely different course the last 20 years, salvaging and fortifying its socialist revolution, as the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union—which many falsely thought Cuba resembled—imploded?

How has it been possible for the Cuban people to hold at bay the most powerful empire history has ever known—or ever will know—for almost 50 years?

Why to this day, despite decades of struggle throughout the hemisphere, does Cuba remain the only free territory of the Americas?

To state that truth in no way diminishes the ground already taken and still being taken in struggle by the people of Venezuela today. It simply registers the indisputable fact that what will be Venezuela's January 1 lies ahead of us, not behind. That what will be the Playa Girón of the Venezuelan toilers lies ahead of us, not behind.

It is in search of answers to these burning questions that books like *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* being presented here at this book fair by Pathfinder Press, and *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, are read worldwide with such great interest. Yes, socialist revolution is possible. It can be defended. It can be advanced even in face of our most powerful enemies.

As the Cuban people have proven in practice, a better world is indeed possible. But in any radical or lasting manner, only through socialist revolution.

The stakes posed in the questions we are discussing here at this forum are immeasurable. It is not only the destruction of the health, welfare, and environment of the earth and all toiling humanity that we confront—the destruction of land and labor, the well-springs of all human progress and culture. Those are and will be the inevitable, devastating consequences of the workings of capitalism. The limits we can impose on those consequences are and can be only a by-product of our revolutionary struggle. And should we fail, we can be sure that we all ultimately face a future of nuclear devastation as well.

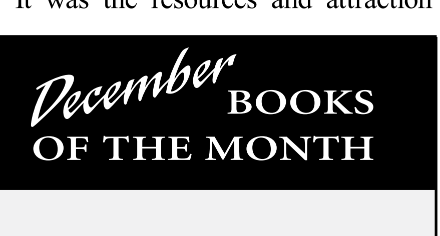
Every revolutionary struggle, anywhere in the world—not least important right here in Venezuela—is a vital piece of the international battle. But until power is taken from Washington by the workers and farmers, and Yankee imperialism is thus decisively disarmed, nothing lasting is settled.

That is why, it seems to me, it is no small matter to answer, "yes, revolution is not only possible in the United States," it is coming. Yes, revolutionary struggles are on the agenda, but their outcome depends on us. Yes, fighting shoulder to shoulder with others determined to assure that struggles along this course are victorious is the most meaningful life possible.



Militant/Jacob Perasso

September 20 march in Louisiana demanding justice for Jena Six, Waters says, registered renewed strength of broader fighting vanguard in the United States "nourished by the power of the recent May Day mobilizations" for legalization of immigrants.



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'Enemy combatants' case

Continued from front page

Amendment protection of freedom of the press.

Khadr, a 21-year-old Canadian citizen, was 15 when he was captured in Afghanistan in 2002 after a firefight involving U.S. Special Forces. Held at Guantánamo for five years without charges, he was arraigned November 8 on charges of killing a U.S. soldier and giving material support to "terrorism."

Khadr's military-assigned lawyers said they have been given a list of prosecution witnesses but cannot build a defense because they cannot ask their client or anyone else about them.

On December 5 the Supreme Court heard multiple cases of Guantánamo detainees who have asserted the right to habeas corpus to challenge their prolonged imprisonment.

If the Supreme Court rules that prisoners at Guantánamo have the right to habeas corpus, the government would be required to present its evidence for their imprisonment in open court.

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EDITORIAL

Abolish the death penalty!

The Troy Davis case illustrates once again how the death penalty is a weapon the ruling class uses to terrorize working people.

The Georgia State Supreme Court is weighing a decision on whether to grant a new trial to Davis, a 38-year-old Black man on death row. The case is a frame-up. Seven of the nine witnesses who once testified that he killed a cop have recanted; four more have come forward to say someone else is guilty. Yet prosecutors continue their drive to execute Davis.

At of the end of 2005, there were 3,254 prisoners on death row in the United States. Their average age at the time of arrest was 28. According to Amnesty International, the United States is one of the six countries in the world that carried out more than 90 percent of all executions in 2006.

The death penalty is part of the arsenal of weapons used by the owners of capital to try to deal blows to the rising resistance, confidence, and increased combativity among growing numbers of workers in the United States. It goes hand in hand with beefing up the numbers of cops in the streets and at the borders, the assault of workers' rights in court, and the increase in secret police spying.

While state-sanctioned murders continue, the number of working people executed by cops in the streets claims far more workers' lives each year. And these figures pale by comparison to the number of working people killed annually as a result of the bosses' profit-driven speedup, lengthening of hours, and gutting of the most basic safety protections on the job.

As the economic crisis deepens, the U.S. rulers will deepen their assault on the wages, jobs conditions, and living standards of workers and farmers. To try and shore up their dying system, the capitalists will have to cut far deeper than anything they have carried out thus far.

Jailing and executions are one way the ruling class is preparing now for what they will do as working people organize to defend themselves from this assault. Already, the U.S. incarceration rate is the highest in the world. There are more than 2.2 million people in U.S. jails and the numbers are steadily growing: up 2.8 percent from 2005 to 2006, with a 4.8 percent increase in female inmates.

The weight of this repression falls disproportionately on Blacks and Latinos. According to Department of Justice statistics for 2005, Blacks were 42 percent of those on death row. Over the course of their lives, one-third of all Black males, one-sixth of all Latino males, and one in 17 white males will do time.

These statistics reflect how the cops, courts, and jails work under capitalism. The anti-working-class, racist use of capital punishment is one reason to demand the Georgia State Supreme Court void the death penalty in Davis's case and grant him a new trial. The labor movement should support his case and demand abolition of the death penalty at every level.

Robert Simms, communist cadre

Continued from page 4

mittee at that time. He also was a staff writer for *Socialist Voice* and for *Lutte ouvrière*, the publications of the Revolutionary Workers League, and then worked full-time on the promotion of Pathfinder books.

Simms often drove the length of Canada visiting bookstores and libraries, despite the fact that a major car accident at age 19 had left him confined to a wheelchair for life.

He was a tireless educator who helped lead many class series on Marxism. In 2004 he helped present a class during the Socialist Workers Party convention on "Jew Hatred, Trotsky-Baiting, and 'Conspiracies.'" He also took on major responsibilities both nationally and locally as the financial director of the Communist League.

For the past 15 years Simms lived in Toronto. He continued to lead the efforts to distribute Pathfinder books. This fall he was an active participant in the sales of several hundred of these books at activities such as the Quebec Social Forum; "Word on the Street," a popular book fair in Toronto; the Salon du livre de Montréal; and the Middle East Studies Association conference.

Two days before his death he was one of several hundred participants in a public meeting of the communist movement in New York City. Simms was a consistent contributor to the *Militant.* An article he coauthored dealing with a government-inspired campaign targeting Muslims in Quebec appeared in last week's issue.

A meeting to celebrate Simms's life and political contributions will be held on January 19 in Toronto. For more information on this event and to send messages, contact the Communist League, 2238 Dundas St. W., Suite 201, Toronto M6R 3A9. Phone: (416)535-9140; e-mail: cltoronto@bellnet.ca.

Canada labor federation debates support for war in Afghanistan

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—After a lengthy and heated debate, delegates to the November 26–30 convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour voted by a 62 percent margin to demand the immediate withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan. The debate on both sides was couched in Canadian nationalist terms.

The proposal was made in separate resolutions by locals of the United Steelworkers (USW) and Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Officials of the Union of National Defence Employees (UNDE) launched a sharp attack on the proposal. The UNDE organizes 14,000 workers at military bases across Canada and some at Ottawa's military base in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

Delegates from the USW, CUPE, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) spoke in support of the resolutions. Some argued that Prime Minister Stephen Harper was undermining the Canadian military's "peacekeeping" role in the world by supporting the "U.S. empire" of President George Bush. Canadian soldiers are also deployed in Haiti, Lebanon, Cyprus, Bosnia, and Kosova, among other countries.

"This is the way to support our troops," a CUPW delegate said in the debate." He argued that the billions spent in Afghanistan could be used for health care, child care, and other social needs in Canada.

"We should get out of Afghanistan and oppose any U.S. attack on Iran," said USW Local 1005 president Rolph Gerstenberger. He argued that U.S. Steel's recent takeover of the Stelco steel plant in Hamilton, Ontario, would mean more pressure to support "U.S." wars.

"This is not about not supporting our troops," said USW Local 8300 delegate Carolyn Eagan. "We are supporting a government of warlords in Afghanistan, not reconstruction," she said, reminding delegates that the New Democratic Party has also demanded the immediate withdrawal of Canadian troops.

Many of the UNDE delegates who spoke against the resolutions wore red T-shirts emblazoned with a yellow ribbon and the slogan "Support our Troops."

"Our soldiers are in Afghanistan supporting women's rights and making life better in that country," another UNDE delegate said.

After the vote was announced, UNDE president John MacLennan asked that his vote against the resolutions be publicly recorded. Many of the UNDE delegates then left the hall in protest against the outcome.

Afghanistan

Continued from front page

of a barrage of attacks by Taliban and allied Islamist forces, especially the south and east, where the fighting involves mainly U.S., British, Canadian, and Dutch forces.

The largest contingents in the NATO-led force are about 15,100 U.S., 7,700 British, 3,200 German, 2,400 Italian, 1,700 Canadian, 1,500 Dutch, 1,200 Turkish, 1,100 French, and 900 Australian troops. A separate U.S.-led force, which conducts counterinsurgency and "counterterror" operations, brings the total occupation troops to about 50,000.

The NATO operation, according to its commanders, is at least "four battalions (totalling 4,000 soldiers) short of what it needs and the force lacks crucial equipment such as helicopters," the *Financial Times* reported November 19. The paper noted that troops from certain countries including Germany, Italy, and Spain operate under restrictions, which among other things "prevent military assets in the relatively peaceful north of the country from being shifted south where they are most needed."

On November 21 the Security and Development Policy Group, a European-based think tank known as the Senlis Council, issued a report stating that the only way to reclaim southern Afghan territories overrun by the Taliban would be for NATO to double the number of its troops to 80,000.

Senlis Council president Norine MacDonald of Canada told CBC News that the NATO force must begin more seriously targeting Taliban training camps in northern Pakistan. "NATO as a whole has got to follow the Taliban into the home bases in Pakistan," she said.

Offering a glimpse of the war's impact on the population, the Senlis report said, "The Afghan workers displaced by Taliban encroachment have spilled into Kandahar City in search of day labour, increasing tensions by driving wages down. The current rate for day labour in the area is less than 180 Afghanis, about $3.50 Canadian."

"The Taliban is gaining grassroots political support by cleverly exploiting Afghan anger over civilian casualty counts throughout southern Afghanistan," the report concluded.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in the Afghanistan war in 2007—the deadliest year to date, according to an Associated Press count. Much of the stiffest fighting has been along the border with Pakistan.

The governor of Nuristan province, Tamim Nursitani, told the press November 28 that an air attack in that area had killed a dozen workers of a local road construction company.

To date, the nearly 750 imperialist military deaths include 469 U.S., 84 British, and 73 Canadian troops.

Ottawa pushes Afghanistan war

Canada's prime minister, Stephen Harper, used the announcement of the latest two Canadian deaths to justify his government's involvement in the war. "The actions of these brave soldiers have brought hope to the Afghan people," he said.

Former U.S. president William Clinton recently praised Ottawa's role in Afghanistan, urging it to remain in Afghanistan past the scheduled withdrawal date of February 2009. Clinton spoke to a gathering of 800 people from business, labor, government, and academia at the Ontario Economic Summit, sponsored by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The U.S. Congress is currently discussing a White House request of $50 billion for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Senator Hillary Clinton, a leading Democratic candidate in the presidential race, has been arguing for a more aggressive war in Afghanistan. Along similar lines, a November 17 editorial in the *New York Times* urged Democrats to keep pushing for a reduction of troops in Iraq in order to "refocus on Afghanistan."

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